

# Thomlinson Junior School

The Goose Market, High Street, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 9PG

**Inspection dates** 3–4 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The standard of pupils' reading, writing and mathematics is similar to the national average. Given their starting points, they should be better.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress throughout their time at school. This is because, in recent years, the quality of teaching has not always been good. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough.
- The standards of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are lower than expected. There are missed opportunities for pupils to improve these skills across all subjects.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects.
- Pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work and learn from their mistakes.
- Some subject leaders are at an early stage in making good use of information from checks on pupils' progress to lead improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- Checks on the impact of actions to bring about improvements, particularly in reading, are too variable in quality to inform future planning.
- Senior leaders and governors have an overly positive view of the quality of teaching over time.
- The school website lacks up-to-date information for parents.

### The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher is very determined in drive forward change. As a result, the quality of teaching and achievement are improving.
- Current work shows improvements in standards in reading, writing and mathematics across year groups.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They say they feel safe in school. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and acting as good role models to the younger pupils.
- There are many and varied opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All staff and governors share the acting headteacher's vision and work well together as a team. As a result the school is improving.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 17 lessons, three of which was observed jointly with the acting headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with: school staff; groups of pupils, senior staff and leaders with responsibility for a specific subject, governors, parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, the school’s procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils’ standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils’ work in their books.
- There were 17 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which the inspectors took into account alongside the responses to the school’s own parental survey. Twenty-two responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were taken into account.

## Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Ellwood

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Thomlinson Junior is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is higher than that found nationally. (This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is higher than that found nationally. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. There are currently very few pupils on the autistic spectrum accessing this provision.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The acting headteacher took up post in September 2013 and will take up the role of substantive headteacher from September 2014.
- Since the previous inspection the local authority has provided support to improve the quality of teaching and leadership and management of the school.
- The acting headteacher is supported by Dearham Academy, an outstanding school where the headteacher is a National Leader in Education. She is also supported by the headteacher of Sillioth Primary School who is a Local Leader in Education.
- As a result of the previous inspection monitoring visits have been carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).
- Currently, the school does not meet the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so that it is all good or better in order to raise pupils' attainment and achievement by:
  - ensuring staff have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and swiftly address any misconceptions as they arise
  - making sure pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work and are given time to respond to teachers' comments within marking
  - ensuring there is a more effective approach to improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar across all subjects
  - ensuring there are enough regular opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing the skills of all subject leaders in checking on pupils' progress and taking action to raise achievement in their areas of responsibility
  - making better checks on the impact of actions to speed up pupils' progress, particularly in reading
  - ensuring governors and senior leaders accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and how well their school is doing compared to others nationally
  - making sure the school's website is kept up-to-date and contains all the required information.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Although pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are similar to national expectations for their age they could be much better given pupils' starting points when they join the school. In 2013, most Year 6 pupils made the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics but too few did better than this.
- Since the appointment of the acting headteacher, pupils' achievement is improving at a faster pace. Assessments of current pupils work show that progress is speeding up in each class across every year group, although not yet as rapidly in Year 3.
- Pupils' abilities when they join the school are usually average. The school has recently introduced assessments in the autumn term of Year 3 which show that there are a minority of pupils who are not as confident in their reading and writing as might be expected. Staff are now working more closely with the infant school to ensure accuracy in the moderation of Year 2 work.
- In 2013, pupils reached standards in spelling, punctuation and grammar that were below average. The school is addressing this issue and current Year 6 pupils are improving on this outcome.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and make similar progress to their peers. Those who access the Special Integrated Unit are extremely well supported and make good progress in their personal and social development. They also make similar academic progress to their peers.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including those eligible for free school meals, make similar progress to all pupils and some do better, as a result of additional support provided. Their attainment in reading is higher than this group nationally and their peers in school. Attainment in mathematics and writing is similar to this group nationally but approximately two terms behind their peers in school by the end of Year 6.
- The most able pupils are now making the progress expected of them and the picture is improving as a result of stronger teaching, for example, with some from a member of staff from a local secondary school. The headteacher is driving successfully the promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across classes and year groups. However, since the acting headteacher was appointed the improvement in the quality of teaching is speeding up pupils' rates of progress.
- Sometimes, not enough is expected of pupils. The work teachers set does not always help pupils to learn well enough and lacks sufficient challenge. There are also times when misconceptions are not dealt with swiftly enough and this slows progress.
- Work is marked regularly but occasionally pupils are not given clear guidance about how to improve their work. Errors are not always corrected by pupils, particularly in mathematics, which leads to missed opportunities to learn from their mistakes. Although adults correct pupils' spellings, punctuation and grammar in written work there is no effective approach to improving these skills across subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading as was clearly seen with Year 6 who were totally enthralled by a storytelling session. Action has been taken to help those who find reading fluently more difficult. However, good checks are not made on the impact of this support. By the time they leave school most pupils are competent readers.
- Displays celebrate pupils' writing. When trips are used to stimulate writing, this brings 'learning to life' for pupils. However, there are not enough opportunities across all subjects to practise and develop pupils' literacy and writing skills and this slows progress.

- Similarly, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in real-life situations across subjects. As a result, pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be.
- When pupils learn well, work is well matched to the abilities of all pupils and gets the best out of them. For example, Year 4 pupils listened attentively to a radio broadcast from when Britain declared war in 1939. This stimulated good discussions in small groups before making copious notes. The list of words created was then used to write their diary entries. Different challenges were given to pupils depending on their abilities. Pupils were keen to share their work and pupils were able to look at aspects of each other's writing and talk about it. Pupils clearly enjoyed learning and good progress was made by all.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Inspection evidence, school records and discussions with staff, pupils and parents show that this is the norm. Staff manage behaviour well and pupils have the opportunity to think about the impact of their actions on others. As a result, disruptions to lessons are most unusual and throughout the school there is a strong atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Several parents told inspectors how happy they are with the school and this is reflected in the results on Parent View. The vast majority would recommend this school to other families.
- Older pupils are good role models for younger pupils and this was seen during lunchtimes when those who are 'peer supporters' keep an eye on younger pupils and act as their buddies. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in the current above-average attendance.
- In most lessons pupils have good attitudes towards learning and concentrate well. They willingly help each other to solve problems and work at finding out things for themselves. When this was the case they behave impeccably.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying. They are confident that there is very little bullying at their school and know exactly what to do if it did happen.
- Pupils feel safe in school because they know that staff care about them and they are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Those who are potentially more vulnerable benefit from the nurture group which provides a safe and secure environment to share any concerns. This helps to build pupils' resilience and confidence.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leadership and management, including governance, requires improvement because the school has not been able to secure progress across year groups and raise pupils' achievement rapidly enough since the previous inspection.
- The acting headteacher has taken clear action to quickly bring about improvements. She has a clear understanding of school priorities. A new system to check on pupils' progress has been introduced alongside more training for staff to improve the quality of teaching. Reviews of staffing, new contracts, appraisal procedures and plans to tackle weaker areas have all been instigated. Although these have yet to have a full impact on attainment the school is now improving and demonstrates that it can improve further.
- The specially resourced provision is well managed and ensures a smooth transition for the next stage of pupils' education.
- Some subject leaders are at an early stage in using the new checking system which measures pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility. Checks on the impact of actions to bring about improvements, particularly in reading, are too variable in quality to inform future planning effectively.
- The headteacher checks the quality of teaching which now directly links with further staff training as well as decisions about salary progression. Opportunities for teachers to develop their

skills by observing good and better practice elsewhere have increased with links with other schools. As a result, there has been an increase in the proportion of good teaching but there is still too much which requires improvement.

- The programmes of study are under review and the introduction of daily phonics (learning the sounds that letters make) sessions help weaker readers. Further efforts to increase opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy across subjects have not been fully implemented.
- The school has a long tradition of outdoor education which allows pupils to experience new activities and take measured risks in unfamiliar environments. During the inspection, a circus was in school to give pupils the opportunities to develop team skills. These experiences promote strong personal and social development in pupils. Occasionally, activities beyond the classroom and school are not fully utilised to further develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, when a circus came to school there were missed opportunities to link learning about symmetry with the wealth of symmetry seen in the circus tent.
- The primary school sport funding is used to provide additional sporting activities such as triathlon. This helps to improve pupils' well-being as well as teachers' skills so that they can teach a wider range of sporting activities to an even higher standard.
- The school website does not contain all the information that is required. For example, some policies are out of date.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Since the previous inspection the local authority has increased its support for the school and provided training. An audit of the skills of the governing body has already been undertaken and all governors now have clear areas of responsibility. Governors contribute to discussions about how additional funds such as the pupil premium and the primary schools' sports funding should be spent but are not diligent in checking that it has a positive effect on pupils' progress. They have not been involved with senior leaders in accurately assessing how well the school is doing compared to others nationally. They are aware of the quality of teaching and links are now in place between teachers meeting their targets and any salary progression which may result.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112125
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	442379

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Junior
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoffrey Ravalde
<b>Acting Headteacher</b>	Brenda Fyrth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 December 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01697 342432
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